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☐ Provisional Application

☒ Regular Utility Application

☐ Continuing Application

☐ The contents of the parent are incorporated by reference

☐ PCT National Phase Application

☐ Design Application

☐ Reissue Application

☐ Plant Application

☐ Substitute Specification

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SPECIFICATION

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR RECORDING VIDEO DATA

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to a recording/reproducing apparatus for recording and reproducing information such as video data, and more particularly to a recording/reproducing apparatus having an improved programming function.

10 2. Description of the Related Art

Recently, a moving-picture-adapted optical disk reproducing apparatus for reproducing video data or audio data recorded on an optical disk has been developed. This reproducing apparatus is in widespread use for the purpose of enjoying movie or sing-along (karaoke) software, usually in the form of an LD or a video/CD reproducing apparatus.

As a data reproducing system for such optical disks, the MPEG-2 (Moving Picture Coding Expert Group) system, an international standard, is used at the present stage, and further a DVD standard which employs the AC3 audio compression system has been proposed recently. This DVD standard can be used to process sub-picture data such as a subtitle for a movie or karaoke, obtained by subjecting bit-map data to run-length compression.

As a standard for the VDV video medium, a DVD-RAM

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(removable medium) standard (4.7GB) has been completed in succession to a DVD-ROM standard, and DVD-RAM drives are now being spreading.

In accordance with the increasing capacity and reducing cost of recording media, a recording/reproducing apparatus equipped with a plurality of drives has come to be realizable. For example, an apparatus equipped with both a large-capacity hard disk drive and a DVD-RAM drive could be devised. In such a recording/reproducing apparatus, there may be a case where a TV program to be kept for a long time is selected from a number of TV programs recorded over a long period of time, and is transferred or copied to a removable medium.

Since, however, the transfer or copying of large-capacity data requires a lot of processing time, it is possible that recording programmed by a timer may be started while data is still being transferred or copied. If the bandwidth used to access a drive is not large enough to execute both accesses to the drive for data transfer or copy and for recording, there may be a case where recording which requires realtime access to the drive cannot be normally executed.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a recording/reproducing apparatus capable of normally executing programmed recording even if a drive

to be used for the recording is used for another task when the recording is started.

To attain the object, there is provided a recording apparatus comprising: a plurality of
5 recording drives recording information containing video data; a determining section determining after recording is programmed and during activation of a task of
10 executing the programmed recording, whether or not that one of the recording drives, on which the programmed recording is executed, is being accessed by another task; an interrupting process section interrupting the
15 another task and enabling the task of executing the programmed recording to execute the programmed recording on the one of the recording drives, if the determining section determines that the one of the recording drives is being accessed by the another task; and an executing section executing the programmed recording using the one of the recording drives.

According to the embodiment of the invention, the
20 current state of a recording-destination drive is checked during the activation of a task of executing programmed recording. If the destination drive is being used by another task of transferring or copying recorded data, it is determined whether or not realtime
25 recording is possible in this state. If realtime recording is impossible, the another task which currently uses the designation drive is interrupted,

thereby enabling the execution of the programmed recording. If realtime recording is possible, the destination drive is simultaneously accessed by the task of executing the programmed recording and the
5 another task currently using the drive, thereby executing the programmed recording.

Additional objects and advantages of the invention will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be
10 learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the invention may be realized and obtained by means of the instrumentalities and combinations particularly pointed out hereinafter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

15 The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and form a part of the specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention, and together with the general description given above and the detailed description of the embodiments given below, serve to
20 explain the principles of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating the configuration of a recording/reproducing apparatus to which the present invention is applied;

25 FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating the operation of programming the recording of data, executed by the recording/reproducing apparatus of the present invention; and

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FIG. 3 is a task management table indicating the state of use of each recording drive.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5 An embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

10 FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating the configuration of a recording/reproducing apparatus to which the present invention is applied. As shown, the recording/reproducing apparatus mainly comprises a hard disk device (HDD) 20; a disk drive 35 which rotates an optical disk 10 as an information recording medium capable of constructing a video file, to thereby read or write data from or to the optical disk 10;

15 an encoder section 50 providing a recording side; a decoder section 60 providing a reproducing side; a switch section 36 which switches a data transfer path; a microcomputer block 30 which controls the operations of the apparatus; and a user interface

20 I/F11.

The encoder section 50 comprises an ADC (Analog Digital Converter) 52, an encoder group 53 which includes a V (Video) encoder, an A (Audio) encoder and an SP (Sub-picture) encoder, a formatter 56 which

25 converts the output of each encoder into a predetermined format, and a buffer memory 57.

The ADC 52 receives external analog video/audio

signals from an AV input section 42, or analog TV/voice signals from a TV (television) tuner 44.

The V encoder has a function of converting an input analog signal into a digital signal compressed at a variable bitrate, on the basis of MPEG-2 or MPET-1. The A encoder has a function of converting an input digital audio signal into a digital signal compressed at a fixed bitrate or a linear PCM digital signal, on the basis of MPEG or AC-3.

When the AV input section 42 has input sub-picture information (for example, it has input a sub-picture signal from a DVD video player with an independent output terminal), or when the TV tuner 44 has received a broadcasted DVD video signal of such data configuration, the SP encoder receives a sub-picture signal (a sub-picture pack) in the DVD video signal. The sub-picture signal input to the SP encoder is converted into a predetermined signal form and sent to the formatter 56.

The formatter 56 uses the buffer memory 57 as its work area so as to execute a predetermined signal process on an input video signal, audio signal or sub-picture signal, etc., and supplies the switch section 36 with record data agreeable to a predetermined format (file configuration) for the DVD.

The section, which reads and/or writes data

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(records and/or reproduces) from and/or to the optical disk 10, includes the disk drive 35 having an optical system and a driving system, the switch section 36, a temporary storage section 37 and an STC (System Time Counter or System Time Clock) 38.

In the apparatus, information input from the A/V input section 42 or the TV tuner 44 and encoded by the encoder section 50, and management information can be supplied to the hard disk device 20 via the switch section 36, and stored in a hard disk incorporated in the hard disk device 20. Further, information recorded in a hard disk can be recorded in the optical disk 10 via the switch section 36 and the disk drive 35. Furthermore, the information input from the A/V input section 42 or the TV tuner 44 and encoded by the encoder section 50, and the management information can be recorded in the optical disk 10 via the switch section 36 and the disk drive 35. In addition, information recorded in the optical disk 10 can be recorded in the hard disk device 20 via the disk drive 35 and the switch section 36.

The microcomputer block 30 includes an MPU (Micro Processing Unit) or a CPU (Central Processing Unit), a ROM which stores a system control program including a process executed by the present invention, and a RAM which provides a work area necessary to execute the program.

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The MPU of the microcomputer block 30 executes the process by the present invention, defective place detection, non-recorded area detection, data-recording-position setting, AV address setting, etc., in accordance with the control program stored in the ROM, using the RAM as the work area.

Those of execution results of the MPU, which should be reported to the user of the disk drive 35, are displayed on the display section of the user interface 11, or are OSD (On Screen Display) displayed on a monitor display. The user interface 11 includes reproduction, stop and record, etc. buttons. The user can operate the recording/reproducing apparatus by pushing these buttons.

The decoder section 60 comprises a separator 62 which separates and reads each pack from video data having a predetermined pack configuration for the DVD; a memory 63 used for the pack separation or other signal processing; a decoder group 64 including a V decoder which decodes main-picture data (the contents of each video pack) separated by the separator 62, an SP decoder which decodes sub-picture data (the contents of each sub-picture pack) separated by the separator 62, and an A decoder which decodes audio data (the contents of each audio pack) separated by the separator 62; and a video processor 66 which appropriately synthesizes main-video data obtained from

the V decoder with sub-picture data obtained from the SP decoder, thereby outputting a main video data with a menu, a highlight button, a sub-title or another sub-picture superimposed thereon.

5 When outputting a digital signal from the A decoder, the signal is output to the outside of the apparatus via an interface (I/F) 75. On the other hand, when outputting an analog signal, a digital signal from the A decoder is converted into an analog
10 one by a DAC 77 via a selector 76 and output to the outside. The selector 76 outputs one of a signal input from the TV tuner 44 or A/V input section 42 via the ADC 52, and a signal input from the decoder group 64. An analog audio signal is supplied to an external
15 component (not shown) (e.g. a multi-channel stereo apparatus of 2 channels to 6 channels).

 A description will now be given of the programming of recording. In the invention, when programming the recording of video data, which is input from an input
20 section such as the A/V input section 42 or the TV tuner 44, etc., if a drive used as a recording destination, such as the disk drive 35 or the hard disk drive 20, etc., is currently being accessed for the transfer or copy of recorded data, the current access
25 to the drive is stopped, and access thereto for the execution of the programmed recording is given priority over the former.

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FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating the operation of programming the recording of data, executed by the recording/reproducing apparatus of the present invention. After the user programs the recording of data (such as a TV program), using, for example, the user interface 11, the microcomputer block 30 determines, upon activation of the programmed recording (i.e. immediately before the start of the programmed recording), whether or not a drive used as a recording destination, such as the hard disk drive 20 or the DVD-RAM disk drive 35, etc., is currently being accessed by another task for the transfer or copying of recorded data (step S1, S2). At this time, the microcomputer block 30 determines the operation state of each drive with reference to, for example, a task table as shown in FIG. 3. The task table of FIG. 3 stores task IDs (three IDs at maximum), such as recording or reproduction, etc., which are currently being executed in each of the hard disk drive and the DVD-RAM drive. Data "00" in the task table indicates that no task is being executed, data "01" indicates, for example, that the drive is accessed by the task of copying. The hard disk drive 20 can simultaneously be accessed by two tasks. In other words, apparently, the hard disk drive 20 can simultaneously execute, for example, recording and reproduction. When the drive 20 is simultaneously accessed by two tasks, data "10"

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If a recording-destination drive is not used to execute another task of transferring or copying recorded data, the control program proceeds to step S5, where the starting time of programmed recording is waited for. If, on the other hand, the recording-destination drive is executing another task of transferring or copying recorded data, it is determined whether or not realtime recording can be executed by simultaneous access, to the recording-destination drive, of the task of executing the programmed recording and another task, i.e. whether or not realtime recording is possible in this state (step S3).

When the present time has reached the starting time of the programmed recording, the microcomputer block 30 activates the recording-destination drive to execute the programmed recording, i.e. to record a set

When the present time has reached the starting time of the programmed recording, the microcomputer block 30 activates the recording-destination drive to execute the programmed recording, i.e. to record a set

TV program (step S6). After finishing the programmed recording and confirming that the recording-destination drive has shifted to a recordable state, the microcomputer block 30 executes a programmed-recording finishing process (step S7). At this time, if there is any other task suspended to execute the programmed recording, the microcomputer block 30 restarts the task. In other words, the microcomputer block 30 restarts the task of transferring or copying recorded data, using the recording-destination drive.

Although a description has been given of a recording/reproducing apparatus and a control method used when executing programmed recording, the invention is not limited to this. It is apparent that the invention is also applicable to an information recording medium such as a ROM or an optical disk which stores a control program as described above.

Additional advantages and modifications will readily occur to those skilled in the art. Therefore, the invention in its broader aspects is not limited to the specific details and representative embodiments shown and described herein. Accordingly, various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the general inventive concept as defined by the appended claims and their equivalents.